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UNCLAS TORONTO 003250

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: CASC KISL KPAO PREL CA

SUBJECT: Reviving the Islamic Spirit Convention

Sensitive but Unclassified - protect accordingly.

¶11. (U) See para 8 for action request.

¶12. (SBU) SUMMARY: A large convention for Islamic youth will take place in Toronto December 23 to ¶26. Organizers expect about 12,000 to 15,000 people to attend - about 1,000 people will likely travel to Canada from the U.S. Since the convention is occurring in the middle of Canada's federal election campaign, Prime Minister Martin and other political dignitaries are expected to put in appearances. END SUMMARY.

¶13. (U) The Toronto-based IHYA Foundation, a not for profit education and advocacy initiative is organizing a "Reviving the Islamic Spirit Convention" for Islamic youth December 23 through ¶26. The convention features speakers from Canada, the U.K., the U.S., Mauritania, South Africa, Switzerland, India, Egypt, Kuwait, and Syria. Additional program details are available at www.revivingtheislamicspirit.com.

¶14. (SBU) Prime Minister Martin is expected to deliver a speech on December 23. Federal house leader Tony Valeri, federal Immigration Minister Joe Volpe, and Ontario Attorney General Michael Bryant are also expected to attend. Toronto Mayor David Miller, who will be vacationing in Greece at the time, has agreed to send a video message to the assembly. The organizers said Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty, Conservative Party leader Stephen Harper, and National Democratic Party leader Jack Layton have been invited but have not yet RSVP'd.

¶15. (U) Convention organizers said they expect about 1,000 persons to travel from the U.S. to Toronto from December 22 through December 27, though they have not formally promoted the event to a U.S. audience. They said they are aware of four buses (two from Michigan, one from Chicago, and one from New Jersey) that have been chartered to transport people to Toronto for the convention.

¶16. (U) This is the fourth Islamic convention being organized by IHYA in Toronto. About 3,000 people attended the first convention, held in January 2003. About 8,000 people attended the January 2004 convention in Toronto and about 12,000 people attended last year's event, held in the Toronto Skydome in December 2004. Organizers expect 12,000 to 15,000 people to attend this year.

¶17. (SBU) Comment: According to their website (www.ihyafoundation.com), "IHYA is committed to fostering a Canadian Muslim identity and developing sustainable communities inspired and guided by the values of classical Islamic civilization." ConGen Toronto has found the IHYA representatives with whom we have met to be progressive Muslims interested in countering radical Islam by offering to youth living in North America a vision of the religion that fits into western democratic states such as the U.S. and Canada. Consul General and senior staff have been invited, and plan to attend portions of the convention.

¶18. (SBU) Action Request: Some of the people who attended the convention last December ran into difficulty with U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers as they attempted to re-enter the U.S. after the conclusion of the convention. Post would be grateful if CBP officers were provided with background about the convention so that legitimate travelers do not encounter undue difficulties.

